

<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/07/14/iran.bahai.trial/>

Leonard Leo, chairman of USCIRF, said last week that the crackdown on protests after Iran's June 12 presidential elections "have exposed the world to the cold realities about how the Iranian government regularly deals with dissent or views that are a perceived threat to the theocratic regime."

"The charges against these imprisoned Baha'is are baseless and a pretext for the persecution and harassment of a disfavored religious minority," Leo said. "They should be released immediately."

USCIRF, which is an independent bipartisan federal commission, said the seven Baha'is are charged under the jurisdiction of Branch 28 of Iran's Revolutionary Court, the same judicial process that convicted Saberi in April. The Baha'i prisoners are accused of spying for Israel, spreading propaganda against the Islamic Republic, and committing religious offenses.